

Archbishop Lori's Homily: Knights of Columbus Supreme Convention; Memorial Mass

Memorial Mass, Knights of Columbus Supreme Convention

St. Louis, Missouri

August 3, 2017

As our Supreme Convention enters upon its last day, as is our custom, we have gathered at the banquet of Christ's Sacrifice, the Eucharist, to remember those who have gone before us in faith.

With joy and thanksgiving, we remember the life and example of the saints and indeed all the holy ones who were members of the Order or friends of the Order. With love and devotion, we remember Pope St. John Paul II who was especially close to the Knights of Columbus throughout his Pontificate. At the end of Mass, Cardinal Dziwisz will bless us with a vessel containing the blood of his friend and mentor, Pope St. John Paul II, a most precious relic that links us not only to the historic example of the saintly pontiff, but also to his ongoing intercession for us in these present days.

Today we remember the Knights of Columbus numbered among the Mexican martyrs, including Saint Mateo Correa Magallanes (Fr. Correa) and his priest companions. In the face of brutal persecution against the Church in Mexico, Father Correa and his brother priests ministered faithfully and lovingly to their people by and in 1927 bore witness to Christ by laying down their lives for his Name. Just as they offered the Sacrifice of Christ daily on the altar, so too they re-produced in their own lives a sacrifice like unto that of the Savior. We honor them today. We cherish their memory. We ask their prayers.

And all of us who are part of the family of the Knights of Columbus carry in our hearts the living memory of the founder of our beloved Order, the Venerable Servant of God, Father Michael J. McGivney. Etched in our hearts is the example of this

devoted parish priest who poured out his life in service of his parish, St. Mary's in New Haven. Out of love for God's people, he created the Knights of Columbus as an organization designed to strengthen the faith of husbands and fathers while providing for their families in time of death and bereavement. Father McGivney's love for the poor, the outcast, the orphan, and the widow remains the true North Star of everything the Order does in service to one and in service to all. May he soon be raised to the full honors of the altar, that is to say, to sainthood.

Moments from now, in the Prayer of the Faithful, the names of brother Knights who have gone before us in faith during past fraternal year will be solemnly read. As you listen, you will hear the names of colleagues and friends in the Order. Many of you carry in your hearts a living memory of these who have departed from our midst so recently. You will also doubtless recall others from your jurisdictions who have died: Brother knights with whom you enjoyed friendship, brother knights whose family members you know, brother knights with whom you worked so closely.

We have gathered to offer Holy Mass for the happy repose of their souls, confident in that hope expressed most perfectly in the Eucharistic Sacrifice we offer: namely the Sacrifice of Christ, crucified and risen, that Sacrifice which unleashed into the world the only love that is 'stronger than sin and more powerful than death.' And so, in hope do we commend our deceased brother Knights to the God who is rich in mercy, to the God who desires only our salvation.

Today's Scripture readings spell out the hope which is so powerfully expressed and accomplished in this holy liturgy. In his Letter to the Romans, St. Paul tells us hope does not disappoint - that is to say, the genuine Christian virtue of hope does not let us down. Here St. Paul is not referring to a vague optimism that, in the end, everything will turn out all right. Nor is St. Paul referring to a tentative feeling that runs like this: "Gee, I wonder if God really means it when he promises us eternal life." No, the hope on which St. Paul staked his life and ministry is a deep seated confidence that God loves us deeply, more deeply than we could ever imagine and that he wills our salvation - not because he gets anything out of it but merely because he does indeed love us in a deep and incomprehensible way. There is no rhyme or reason here - God's love lacks a "why" - it is for us to lose ourselves in this love, to be 'all lost in wonder', praise, and thanks.

Paul presses home the point when he says that no one lays down their life for another except possibly for a really good person – then one might have the courage to die. Yet, he says, God’s love is proven for us in that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, while we were far from God, estranged from his love. By means of the Cross, Jesus bridged the chasm that our sins created and pulled us close to himself, uniting us to himself, to his Father, and to one another. And more than that, he poured out his life so that we could be saved from our sins and then, through the Holy Spirit that same divine love was poured into our hearts. For Jesus did not come into the world merely make us objects of his pity – rather he desired that we would be truly reconciled to him and to the Father, and that we become his friends (Jn. 15:13-14) and his coworkers (1 Cor. 3:9; 1 Jn. 8).

The saints and holy ones associated with our Order staked their lives on this truth and thus they reign with Christ in glory, all the while interceding for us, and encouraging us as we journey toward our heavenly home. In that same hope, we commend to the Lord all our deceased fellow Knights & families to the Lord who is truly “kind and merciful”, the Lord who is a compassionate Father, “slow to anger and abounding in kindness” (cf. Psalm 103).

The Gospel even more dramatically spells out the hope that is expressed and accomplished in the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. For, as you recall, the Gospel paints the picture of the Last Judgment when Christ will come in glory to separate the sheep from the goats. In any humble soul, there is always a twinge of holy fear

lest we fall into presumption and take our salvation for granted. Yet, as members of the Knights of Columbus, this Gospel passage should fill our hearts with special hope and fervent joy. For the criterion, the standard, by which the Good Shepherd will judge in charity – the foundational principle of the Knights of Columbus. Those friends and members of the Order numbered among the saints and holy ones poured out their lives in service to others, especially the poor and vulnerable. And those whom we commend today to the Lord of life and love were our partners in the charitable works of the Knights of Columbus – a charity that is as intensely local as it is far-flung.

It was alongside of these, our deceased brother knights, that we provided warm

winter coats for inner-city kids, it was with these same Knights that we recognized the image of Christ in a young person competing in Special Olympics. With our fellow Knights, now in eternity, we helped families facing natural disasters, fire, and the death of loved ones, even as in solidarity with the whole Order we reached out to persecuted Christians halfway across the world and to those suffering disease and hunger on a scale that is hard to imagine . . . and all because Father McGivney taught us the capital importance of seeing Christ in the widow, the orphan, the outcast, the vulnerable. Yes, dear friends, our hope should run high for those whom we commend this day, as well as for ourselves and our loved ones - so long as we too recommit ourselves to the works of charity, indeed to a life of charity!

May it one day come to pass, dear friends, that every member and friend of the Order will hear the Good Shepherd say, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." May God bless us and keep us always in his love. Vivat Jesus!